

30 January 2023

Dear Policy & Resources Committee Councillors,

Subject: Closure of Public Toilets

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove are writing to you in liaison with the Friends, Families and Travellers and on behalf of members of the public who have contacted us about the proposal to close many of the city's public toilets.

It is reported in [The Argus](#) that there are 18 closures planned including ten in parks, and six seafront locations. Many locations are isolated, and the alternatives of shops and restaurants are unavailable.

We appreciate the budget pressures facing the Council and requirement to set a balanced budget. We also understand the cost of maintaining the city's public toilets has risen sharply since the external contractor relinquished the contract and the service was brought in house.

Healthwatch is concerned that closures will impact on the following groups, many of which have protected characteristics: families, pregnant and menstruating women, elderly people, people with long-term incontinence issues (for example, Colitis, Crohn's disease, IBS, Parkinson's, bowel, and bladder cancers), those that are wheelchair bound and with other mobility issues, as well as carers, school groups, and people from the travelling community. These groups are already negatively impacted by the winter closure of several public facilities.

The city is likely to suffer as a tourist and holiday destination, as visitors could be reluctant to spend time in locations where there are no public facilities. This could also lead to many of our city's beauty spots being spoilt due to emergency situations.

Our beaches and the surrounding countryside are important factors in people's ability to remain physically and mentally fit. These closures could therefore impact on people's mental and physical wellbeing.



To further highlight these issues, Healthwatch draws your attention to the attached study by our partner organisation, Friends, Families and Travellers. This study indicates a clear correlation between lack of accessible sanitary facilities and the following health problems:

- Decrease in fluids taken (and the associated negative physical consequences);
- High propensity for anxiety and depression,
- Likelihood of A and E admittance due to related bladder, urinary and/or kidney problems,
- Negative effect on sleep.

Based on this study's findings, the implication is that the closure of toilet facilities is likely to increase the health inequalities of several groups. This includes members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, people with long-term conditions and mobility issues, as well as the groups mentioned earlier, with protected characteristics.

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove asks Brighton and Hove City Council the following:

- Has an [equalities impact assessment](#) been carried out?
- If not, Healthwatch asks that the Council do so before deciding to move ahead with the proposed toilet closures.
- If an assessment has been carried out, Healthwatch requests to see it and have the opportunity to comment before a decision is taken.

Healthwatch respectfully asks Brighton and Hove City Council to fully consider the negative impacts on residents and visitors to the city, particularly those with protected characteristics, and not to implement the proposed public toilet closures.

Yours sincerely,



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